

This background paper aims to unpack the meaning of populism by drawing from existing literature on the concept and come out with a working definition that underpins the rest of the brief. Following the brief conceptual overviews, the paper will broadly review the rise of right-wing populism in Europe and analyse the key economic, socio-cultural and political reasons for

this trend. Subsequently, this paper will briefly review a selection of European countries where right wing parties have gained a foothold in parliaments before concluding on the outlook of right-wing populism in Europe.

Defining populism

Many scholars have attempted to distil the essence that defines ‘populism’, some coming to agreement on key features but disagreeing or ignoring others. In an interview with American news site Vox, Harvard Political Scientist [Pippa Norris identified three core elements she determined were fundamental to defining populism](#). Firstly, populism involved an “appeal to popular sovereignty over and above liberal democracy” – a sense that power resides with the “people” as opposed to the elite. Secondly, populists were anti-establishment and lastly, populism oft involves a charismatic leader that claims to represent the people. While Norris provides a helpful starting point to the features of populism, the dimensions do not provide a typification for populism – is it a political style? An ideology? Is populism a brand of policy?

In their book *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser (2017) adopt an ideational approach to populism, defining it as:

*“a **thin-centred ideology** that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic camps, “**the pure people**” versus “**the corrupt elite**”, and which argues that politics should be an **expression of life of the volonté générale** (general will) of the people.”* (p.6)

According to Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2017), the dimension of a “thin-centred ideology” explains why populism is often associated with other ideologies. In fact, populism rarely exists in a “pure form” (p.7). The flexibility of populism as a thin-centred ideology may account for why populism can exist as either left- or right-leaning, although it has increasingly manifested as right-wing populism in Europe. Similar to Norris, this definition shares the common features of anti-establishment/anti-elite sentiment and a promise to represent the ignored ‘common folk’. The final dimension is the Rousseauian notion of a “general will”, which suggests there is a homogenous and agreed upon interest articulated by the general public.

While the earlier two definitions offer useful insight into understanding populism, perhaps the most comprehensive definition is proposed by Jan-Werner Müller (2016) in his seminal work, *What is Populism?*. He firstly conceived of populism as:

*“(A) particular **moralistic imagination of politics**, a way of perceiving the political world that sets a morally **pure** and fully **unified**—but, I shall argue, **ultimately fictional**—people against elites who are deemed corrupt or in some other way morally inferior.”* (p.16)

Müller echoes Norris, Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser’s observation that populism has an anti-establishment element. However he also rightly points out that populism does not have an exclusive claim to anti-elitist criticism. Anti-establishment in itself is not enough to determine which party is populist or not. For Müller (2016), populists are not only anti-elite, they are always

“anti-pluralist: populists claim that they, and *only they*, represent the people” (p.16). He also refers to this phenomenon as a “claim to exclusive representation” (p.16). It is the anti-pluralist element that is the defining characteristic of populism and populist rhetoric.

Building on the idea of a Rousseauian general will, Müller notes that “the people” that populists claim to exclusively represent are ultimately a construction, and perceived as a passive group that the populists speak for. Furthermore, he observes the exclusionary nature of “the people”, [as populists are inclined to suggest that individuals who do not support populists fall outside “the people”](#). This exclusionary tactic extends to their treatment of political opposition; for populists, “as principled anti-pluralists, cannot accept anything like a legitimate opposition” (Müller, 2015).

Due to the anti-pluralist nature of populists, Müller asserts that populism represents an undemocratic way of rule – denying legitimate opposition and making claim to exclusive representation even when empirical evidence suggests otherwise. This stands in contrast to Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2017), who were willing to concede that populism may be seen as a “democratising force” (p.18) given its association with direct democracy.

Rise of populism in Europe

Over the last two decades, Europe has seen the rise in popularity of populist parties, particularly on the right of the political spectrum. According to a report carried by The Guardian, populist parties accounted for roughly 7% of votes [across Europe in 1998. However, recent national elections in several European countries show over 25% of votes were for a populist party](#). As at 2018, 11 European countries have populist parties holding a share in national government. [The total European population that is ruled by a government with at least one populist member in cabinet has increased from 12.5 million to 170 million](#).

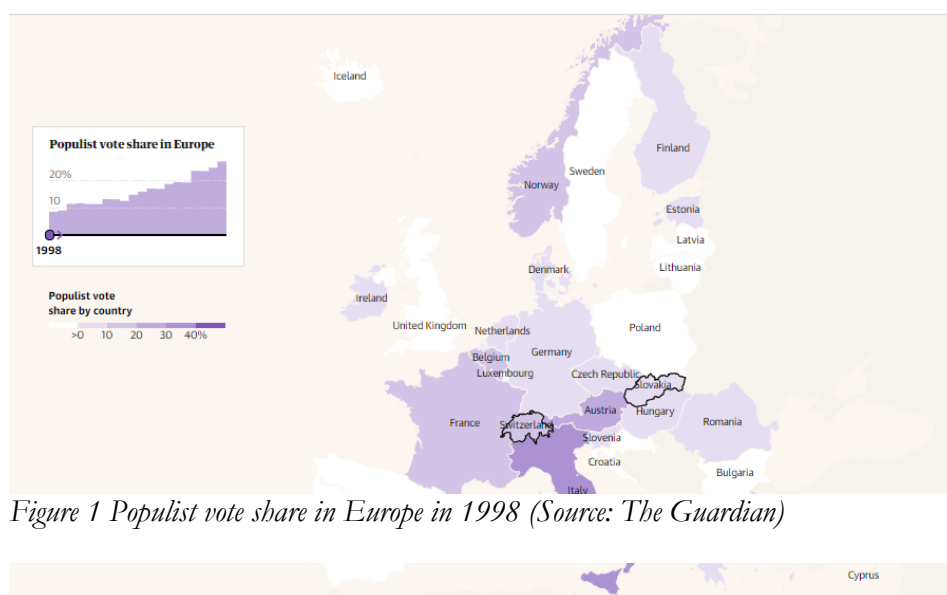


Figure 1 Populist vote share in Europe in 1998 (Source: The Guardian)

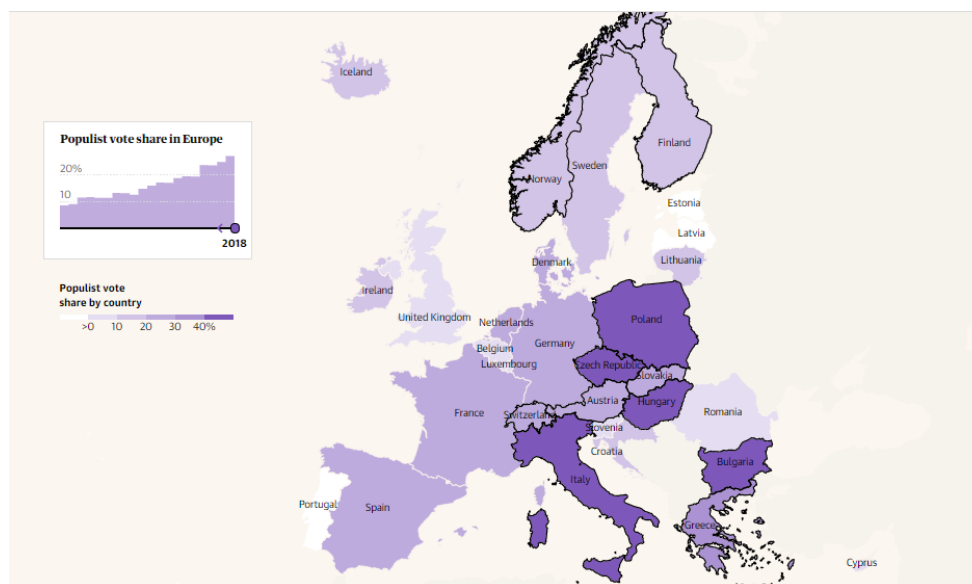


Figure 2 Populist vote share in 2018 (Source: *The Guardian*)

On a regional level, the 2014 European Parliament (EP) elections was a significant turning point that saw populist parties make great gains at a supranational level. Far-right parties such as the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), Italy's Five-Star Movement (M5S) and French *Rassemblement National* (RN) won over 20% of the vote respectively. Greece's neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party even managed to gain 9% of the vote (Lazaridis, Campani, & Benveniste, 2016).

At a national level, some of these parties have made waves in their own government. A brief overview of countries with a significant or rising right-wing populist presence can be found [below](#)

Factors for the rise of right-wing populism in Europe

This section looks at the main drivers that have allowed right-wing populist parties to make the significant gains outlined above. Economic, social and political developments within and outside the bloc, have created an environment in Europe that has allowed populist parties to gain a stronghold or have an influence over policy.

Economic Crises and Globalisation: capitalising on economic uncertainties

Several analysts (Guiso, Herrera, Morelli, & Sonno, 2019) believed that the economic crises from 2008 and the impact of globalisation contributed to the rise of populism in Europe. The Great Recession and subsequent Eurozone crisis in the late 2000s saw countries such as Greece and Spain left with monumental debt deficits that they were unable to pay off. As members of the euro zone, both countries were constrained by fiscal regulations and were unable to counter shocks to the economy, a phenomenon termed "policy strait-jacket" effect (Guiso et al., 2019). According to Guiso et al. (2019), the inability of euro zone countries to respond quickly to such economic crises, as a result of the institutional constraints, generated greater distrust in existing

establishments and paved the way for populist parties to gain support. This observation is echoed by Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser (2017), who note that the aftermath of the economic crises also saw the growth of left-wing populist movements such as Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain.

While economic crises seem to have largely bolstered left-wing populists, right-wing populist parties have also taken advantage of the economic developments to gain support for their cause. The multifaceted aspects of globalisation and their impact on the socio-economic structures has led to a backlash against its effects in recent times. In their study of Eurozone countries, Guiso et al. (2019) further test the effect of “globalisation shock”, or a country’s exposure to globalisation, on populist support. They found that globalisation shock increased support for populist parties in industrial regions of Eurozone countries, and the result was significantly higher than in regions of non-Eurozone counterparts. A separate study by Colantone and Stanig (2018) found that regions in the UK adversely affected by economic globalisation (i.e. relocation of manufacturing activities) tended to vote “Leave” in the Brexit referendum. These studies suggest that economic globalisation may leave segments of voters experiencing economic insecurity and higher institutional distrust, making populist anti-elite rhetoric more attractive. Rodrik (2018) offers a useful distinction in how left and right-wing populists utilise globalisation to their benefit. For right-wing populist parties, they are likely to invoke ethno-national divisions to mobilise support, pinning the adverse economic effects on the invasion of “others”. This may also account for the tendency of right-wing European populist parties to ride on xenophobic and anti-immigrant platforms.

A ‘Nativist’ Europe amid growing migration

Another factor that has had considerable sway on populist influence is the issue of migration and the perceived loss of national or “European” identity. Political and security unrest in parts of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) resulted in a spike in the number of refugees arriving on the shores of Europe, seeking asylum. The highest [number of arrivals recorded was in 2015 at 1,015,078](#). While numbers have dropped in the years since, it remains a highly politicised issue in Europe, especially in countries such as Italy, which has borne the brunt of refugee arrivals due to its geographic location. In 2017, Italy received 67% of migrant arrivals to the EU.

Müller (2015) observes that in right-wing populism, populists not only pit the common “people” against the elite, they “construe an “unhealthy coalition” between the elite ... and marginal groups that also do not belong.” Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2017) argue that populists “spare no effort in creating *a sense of* crisis... populist radical right parties in Europe try to redefine (sometimes relatively modest) increases in refugees as an “immigration crisis”, which they contend is caused by incompetent and corrupt mainstream parties” (p.106). Voters already concerned with issues of migration or the liberal values espoused by institutions such as the EU may find affinity with populist parties playing on identity politics and perceived threats to national identity.


Eurosceptics: decision-making at local versus supranational level



The third key factor to consider is the ongoing debate on where the locus of decision-making lies in Europe. This debate relates to earlier issues of migration and economic management. The 2014 EP elections saw the rise of Eurosceptic, right-wing populists, (re)igniting the tension of decision-making at the supranational level (i.e. the EU) and at the national member state-level.



As an institution, the EU is unique in its high levels of regional integration and status as a supranational organisation. The “supranational” nature requires a certain “transfer of national autonomy and decision rights to EU institutions” and “shifts democratic control further away from national electorates... increasing the distance to the ordinary citizen” (Buti & Pichelmann, 2017). Coupled with unhappiness at the economic outcomes of certain EU rules (i.e. austerity measures, fiscal regulations) and asymmetrical management of the “migrant problem”, there was increased discontent with ceding decision-making power to the EU.


Right-wing populism across Europe



This section will provide a brief overview of European countries in which populist parties have made significant voting gains, entered government or managed to exercise influence over policy in their country/in the EU. The list of countries were adapted from [a recent country-by-country report](#) carried by the BBC.



Country	Populist Parties (% votes, seats won, key issues)
 <p>Austria</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main populist party: far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Leader: Heinz-Christian Strache ○ Founded in 1956 as a national liberal party with close associations to the Nazis. Former leader Jörg Haider was the son of Austrian Nazi Party members. ○ In the course of its existence, the party has toggled between the extreme-right to more centrist positions, before it adopted a “far-right, anti-elite and populist party platform from 1986 onward”. • Electoral Performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Won 26% of vote in 2017 Austrian parliamentary elections ○ Came into power after forming a coalition with the conservative Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP), led by Sebastian Kurz. ○ In the 2019 EP elections, the FPÖ emerged third with 17% of the vote, in spite of an ongoing corruption scandal. • What do they say? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In 2017, the FPÖ- ÖVP coalition pledged to “oppose deeper political integration among EU member states” and to return decision-making power to national governments ○ Prohibit “fascistic Islam”


	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Clamp down on illegal immigration by securing national borders – a policy objective shared with coalition partner ÖVP • A corruption scandal in 2019 saw the ousting of Vice-Chancellor Strache, Chancellor Kurz and their coalition government. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Kurz stated he would not oppose another coalition with other far-right parties if re-elected in the September federal elections
 <p>Denmark</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main populist party: Danish People's Party/<i>Danske Folkeparti</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Formed in 1996 ○ Leader: Kristian Thulesen Dahl • Electoral Performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Won record number of votes in 2015 Danish general elections with 21%, second largest party in government ○ Strong performance in 2014 EP Elections, winning close to 27% of vote ○ However, support for the DPP waned, indicated by their poor showing in the recent 2019 general elections – voter share dropped from 21% to 8.7% • What do they say? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The DPP is anti-EU and anti-immigration ○ DPP has exercised considerable influence over migration policy in the last two decades ○ Tougher immigration policies have since been introduced to the country, including permitting the seizure of migrants' valuables, doubling the punishment specific crimes in areas termed "ghettos" – a proxy for migrant-heavy regions • While support for the DPP may have diminished, some analysts note that the right-leaning minority governments have relied on their informal support and more mainstream parties have adopted a similar anti-immigration stance
 <p>Estonia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main populist party: Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Leader: Mart Helme • Electoral Performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ EKRE doubled its share of the vote in the 2019 general elections, winning almost 18% ○ The party is one of three in the current coalition government ○ In the 2019 EP Elections, EKRE won roughly 12% of the vote • What do they say? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The party ran on an anti-immigration platform, is anti-EU and has been vocally critical of same-sex marriage and women's rights

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Deputy leader Martin Helme was once quoted as saying he wanted Estonia to “be a white country”
 <p>France</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main populist party: National Rally/<i>Rassemblement National</i> (RN) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Leader: Marine Le Pen • Electoral Performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The 2014 EP elections saw RN emerging first in polls with 24.86% of the vote ○ RN maintained their position in the 2019 EP elections with 23% of the vote ○ Le Pen ran against Emmanuel Macron in the 2017 presidential election but was defeated • What do they say? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Previously an advocate for “Frexit” and staunchly anti-euro, the party recently revised its stance to focus on “localism” – an anti-globalisation and anti-free trade position ○ RN has proposed prioritising public spending on local companies and industries ○ Similar to other right-wing populist parties across Europe, RN opposes immigration
 <p>Germany</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main populist party: Alternative for Germany (AfD) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Co-chaired by Alexander Gauland and Jörg Meuthen ○ Formed in 2013 on anti-euro platform, since shifted to a more far-right stance • Electoral Performance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Won over 12.6% of the vote in 2017 German Federal Elections ○ Entered parliament for first time with over 90 seats in the Bundestag ○ Emerged fourth in Germany during the 2019 European Parliament (EP) elections, winning 11% of the vote • What do they say? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The party has spoken against Angela Merkel’s 2015 open-door policy – which saw over 1.5 million refugees arriving in Germany (as at 2017) ○ They sought to amend the German constitution, removing the right to an individual hearing in asylum cases ○ The immediate deportation of refugees who have had asylum applications rejected, regardless of the danger facing them in their home country ○ In 2019, the AfD adopted a manifesto that called for a reform of the EU – abolishment of the EP, returned decision-making power on

	specific issues back to national governments and subjecting decisions on EU policy to referendum
 <p>Hungary</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main populist parties: Fidesz party <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Leader: Hungarian Prime Minister (PM) Viktor Orban • Electoral Performance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2018 Hungarian general election: PM Orban secured a third consecutive term in “a landslide victory” ○ The Fidesz party also gained a sweeping victory in the 2019 EP elections, with the Fidesz-KDNP coalition winning 52% of the vote ○ Hungary is one of few European countries which has seen a populist party hold a significant majority in government • What do they say? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Following their victory in the 2019 EP, Orban promised to halt immigration across Europe and said that the results showed Hungarians wanted Fidesz to “protect Christian culture in Europe”. ○ Prior to the EP elections, Orban had pursued an aggressive anti-immigration campaign. ○ Earlier this year, Orban introduced tax breaks and subsidies to encourage families to have more children. He explicitly stated the policy was intended to stop immigration in response to population decline.
 <p>Italy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main populist parties: Five-Star Movement (M5S), Lega Nord (LN, or League) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ M5S Leader: Luigi Di Maio ○ LN Leader: Matteo Salvini • Electoral Performance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Italy saw a populist M5S-LN Coalition government installed in 2018 following months of political deadlock. ○ In a national parliament of 630 seats, both parties combined hold 349 seats ○ In the recent 2019 EP elections, Salvini’s League party emerged first with 34% of the vote, while Di Maio’s M5S garnered 17% of the vote • What do they say? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The populist government promised to revive the Italian economy, amidst high public debt, and tighten migration policies. ○ In the lead-up to the 2019 EP elections, Salvini (Italy’s interior minister) had attempted to unite other right-wing parties in Europe under an “anti-migrant, anti-Islam”, “anti-bureaucracy banner”. ○ Nationally, Salvini spearheaded a security decree, which placed hefty

	<p>fines on vessels that "ignore bans and limitations" on accessing Italian waters.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Salvini has also refused migrant rescue ships access to Italian ports, leaving migrants and crew alike stuck on board ships till other EU states have agreed to take in the rescued migrants. ○ On economy, Salvini has vowed to make tax cuts a priority in a bid to revive the economy, opposing the EU's calls to cut its deficit. ○ Salvini previously called for fiscal reform in the EU.
 <p>Netherlands</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main populist parties: Forum for Democracy (FvD), Party for Freedom (PVV) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ FvD Leader: Thierry Baudet ○ PVV Leader: Geert Wilders • Electoral Performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Newcomer party FvD surprised in the 2019 provincial elections by winning the most votes, which saw PM Mark Rutte and his party lose their senate majority ○ FvD won 13 seats in the 75-seat upper house, while PVV's share of the seats dropped from 9 to 5 ○ In the 2019 EP elections, FvD won a little over 10% of the vote while PVV gained only 3.5% of votes. • What do they say? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ FvD's Baudet ran on an anti-immigration platform, criticising Rutte's immigration policy as lax ○ In the lead-up to the 2017 elections, the PVV ran on an anti-Islam, anti-EU platform, with leader Wilders promising to "take the Netherlands out of the EU, close all mosques and ban the Koran."
 <p>Poland</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main populist parties: right-wing Law and Justice party (PiS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Leader: Jarosław Kaczyński • Electoral Performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2015 parliamentary elections: winning 235 seats out of 460 seats in the lower house of Parliament, allowing it to form a standalone government ○ The party also enjoyed a strong showing in the 2019 EP elections, winning 45% of the vote. • What do they say? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ PiS has spoken against adopting the euro, stating it would not do so till "its economy matches the size of neighbouring Germany" ○ The party has been critical of the euro – considering it a tool of "German domination" ○ In the run up to the 2015 elections, PiS ran on an anti-migrant, anti-

	<p>Muslim platform; leader Kaczyński once said migrants carried ““all sorts of parasites and protozoa, which ... while not dangerous in the organisms of these people, could be dangerous here.””</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recently, PiS has campaigning heavily against LGBT rights, with Kaczyński calling it a “threat” to conservative, Catholic Poland.
 Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main populist parties: Vox <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Leader: Santiago Abascal • Electoral Performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The party first made waves in December last year when it won 12 seats during the regional elections in Andalusia, marking the first time a far-right party had won seats in regional parliament since 1982 ○ Vox subsequently won 10.3% of the vote in the 2019 Spain general elections – gaining 24 seats in parliament ○ In the 2019 EP elections, Vox emerged fifth with 6.2% of the vote • What do they say? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Prior to the 2018 regional elections, leader Santiago Abascal rejected its far-right label and said the party “defends the constitutional order, constitutional reform in some areas, the unity of Spain and centralisation of the state, and wants immigration to be brought under control”. ○ Vox heavily opposed making concessions to the secessionists in Catalonia ○ Vox “vowed to fix Spain’s semi-federal system” and argued against the progressive stance of the incumbent government – critical of “radical feminism”, gay rights and multiculturalism • Analysts suggest that Spain’s delayed addition to the far-right populist wave in Europe had been in part due to Spain’s recent memory of fascism under the Franco dictatorship. • However increasing unhappiness with the Catalonia secessionist movement led to increased support for Vox, especially among traditional conservative Popular Party supporters
 Sweden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main populist parties: Sweden Democrats/<i>Sverigedemokraterna</i> (SD) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Leader: Jimmie Akesson ○ First entered parliament in 2010 with 5.7% of vote ○ Founded in 1988 and had neo-Nazi roots • Electoral Performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In the 2018 Swedish general election, SD won almost 18% of the vote, taking 62 seats in parliament – making it the third largest party in parliament ○ During the 2019 EP elections, the SD emerged third with 15.3% of

	<p>the vote</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do they say? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SD opposed the mainstream multiculturalism stance advocated by mainstream Swedish parties – the SD claimed foreigners did not share “Swedish values” ○ According to the SD manifesto, the party wished to halt receiving asylum seekers in Sweden and instead sought “real aid for refugees” so that they can “enable more immigrants to return to their native countries”. ○ The SD national vice chair Julia Kronlid claimed the party “(wanted) to raise the amount that we send abroad in overseas aid so that people can see that we are not evil people who don’t care about people in a difficult situation”. ○ The anti-euro SD also supported a “Swexit” referendum but reversed its stance in the run-up to the 2019 EP elections
 <p>United Kingdom</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main populist parties: United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), Brexit Party <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Formed in 1993, UKIP opposed the 1992 Maastricht Treaty and in subsequent manifestos, articulated a desire to remove the UK from the EU and avoid membership into organisations that would require the UK to cede sovereign decision-making to an external power (Lazaridis et al., 2016). ○ Formerly led by Nigel Farage, Farage quit the party in 2018, criticising the party for veering toward “extremist politics” and subsequently ran in the 2019 EP elections with the newly-formed ‘Brexit Party’ • Electoral Performance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Under Farage, UKIP emerged first in the UK during the 2014 EP elections with 26.77% of the vote ○ In the 2019 EP elections, the Brexit party emerged first with slightly over 30% of the vote. ○ The Brexit party has yet to clinch any seats in the UK House of Commons • What do they say? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ UKIP’s 2017 manifesto promised to cut net migration to zero within 5 years, implement a niqab and burqa ban and to deliver Brexit, among others ○ While no manifesto or clear policy agenda has been articulated, Farage claimed UKIP and the Brexit party had little difference in terms of policy but criticised his former party for allowing “the far right to join it and effectively take it over”

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <u>Farage has also distanced himself from discussing issues around Islam, promising a diverse team</u>
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Source: Icons made by Freepik from www.flaticon.com

Outlook for Europe: populism on decline?

Despite making significant gains in the recent 2019 EP elections, [populist parties across Europe performed less strongly than predicted by pre-election polls](#). Despite [ambitious pre-election plans to create a populist, Eurosceptic bloc](#), their combined numbers hardly constitute a majority. Moreover, despite sharing the umbrella label of being a “populist”, different right-wing parties have shown to have differing priorities and gripes with the existing system. On a national level, we see some pushback against right-wing parties, [with the recent Greek snap elections pushing the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party out of parliament](#). Does this herald the end of the populist wave? The strong performance by the Green and liberal parties may suggest a change in the populist tide, but also herald a more fragmented parliament in the coming term. This could raise the threat of political gridlock and perhaps the need to make deals or compromises with right wing populist parties?

In an Op-Ed [carried by the Financial Times](#), Europe Editor Tony Barber warns that “Europe’s traditional centre-right parties cannot afford complacency”. Citing the example of Austria, he cautions moderate parties to think carefully about offering to share power with more radical forces in government.

Müller discusses [counter-strategies in containing the threat of right-wing populism](#). He cautions against a “cordon sanitaire” on populist parties already elected into government (a strategy already [employed in the European Parliament](#)), arguing that shutting out such parties also shuts out the voters that elected them into power. He also warns against the other extreme, which is to “run after populists” and emulate their talking points. Ultimately, he proposes that there is no “alternative to engaging with populists” but draws a distinction between engaging in discussions with populists and parroting one. He stresses that when populists make exclusive claims to representation and or question democratic fundamentals, mainstream parties have the responsibility to hold them accountable and set boundaries. In engaging with populists and taking them (and mainstream parties who start to sound like them) to task for their words and actions, perhaps the populist threat can be contained.

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